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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN - EARTHQUAKE: USAID/DART SITUATION REPORT
12: FIELD ASSESSMENT OF BATAGRAM

Summary

1. From October 30 to 31, the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) Economic and Livelihoods Advisor (ELO), Program Officer (PO), Water and Sanitation Officer (WSO), Shelter and Settlements Advisor (SSA), Earthquake Expert (EE), Military Liaison Officer (MLO), Field Officer (FO), and U.S. Army Engineer conducted a multi-sectoral assessment in Batagram District to better understand conditions and the response of the donor community. This cable summarizes the results of their assessment and analysis, and it provides recommendations for action.

Batagram District

2. In Batagram District, the USAID/DART performed building assessments in order to devise an effective earthquake mitigation strategy. The USAID/DART EE and SSA observed that approximately 65 percent of the buildings are stone masonry, 15 percent are reinforced concrete frame, 15 percent are brick masonry, and 5 percent are other types, including adobe. Nearly one hundred percent of the building stock is non-engineered, was built with poor quality materials, and demonstrates poor workmanship. Most buildings are two to three stories, but some are four stories.

3. According to the USAID/DART EE and SSA, buildings in Batagram District manifest a number of major deficiencies. In general, buildings lack integrity between structural elements; the wall-to-wall, wall-to-roof, and column-to-beam connections are not structurally sound. Reinforcement detailing such as splicing, 90-degree bends in stirrups, large spacing of stirrups, and inadequate reinforcement bars in columns and beams, is a major problem. Measures for improving earthquake resistance are basic and simple, and local masons, technicians, and engineers can learn such methods.

4. The USAID/DART EE and SSA reported that some of the families affected in the Allai Valley have traveled to other settlements where they are temporarily living with relatives in a hosting arrangement. Others have obtained shelter materials (primarily tents) and returned to upland villages, a small number have moved to informal camps, and some affected people have moved into a newly-established government of Pakistan (GOP) camp. An unknown portion of those who remain will encounter difficulties obtaining adequate food during the winter. It is uncertain whether camp size will increase as winter sets in. In general, people prefer to stay near their homes, especially when their livestock and belongings remain in their home area.

5. The USAID/DART EE, SSA, and WSO paid a visit to the Batagram office of the Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP). Following the earthquake, SRSP began implementing relief programming. SRSP has established 42 tented villages in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), including seven tented villages in Batagram District. SRSP has not yet erected a

tented village in Allai Valley. Each of SRSP's tented villages serves an average of 30 families. To date, SRSP has served 9,000 people NWFP. SRSP works with World Vision (WV), the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Mercy Corps. SRSP is distributing family kits, which include tents, blankets, a tarpaulin, utensils, and other supplies, provided by UNICEF. SRSP/Batagram employs one engineer and six humanitarian aid workers.

Jessul

16. After the office visit, the SRSP staff joined the USAID/DART EE, SSA, and WSO on a visit to the tent village in Jessul, which SRSP has developed for 25 families. The USAID/DART EE and SSA observed damaged houses and other building structures and met with people affected by the earthquake. Affected people in Jessul stated that their first priority is finding a job and their second is repairing and rebuilding their houses. Currently, the tents in Jessul are pitched in the upland agricultural land. People are using the same traditional water sources that they were using prior to the earthquake, and they are using drainage ditches next to fields for sanitation. These practices, coupled with the small number of households occupying tents in the village, minimize the need for water and sanitation interventions. Beginning in March, the affected population will need the land on which the tents are pitched for sowing crops. Therefore, it is imperative to facilitate seismic-resistant construction training immediately to ensure that imminent repair and rebuilding activities do not reflect past building practices. This could be achieved through a cash-for-training (CFT) program that would rapidly expand knowledge of seismic-resistance construction among local masons, carpenters, and building professionals.

17. Cognizant of the need to commence with agricultural activities at the outset of spring, people are beginning to repair and rebuild their houses, to the extent possible, in hopes of beginning full reconstruction in the spring. Those interviewed remarked that they were waiting for aftershocks to subside before beginning to rebuild their homes. They expressed the hope that the GOP would help them reconstruct through loans, compensation, or other mechanisms. They plan to begin repair activities in approximately two weeks.

Mehra

18. The USAID/DART MLO and the U.S. Army Engineer traveled with representatives from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to the Mehra site, approximately 40 kilometers (km) northwest of Batagram, on the banks of the Indus River and just off the Karakorum highway. At this site, the GOP military proposes to build a tented camp to house 40,000 to 50,000 people. The USAID/DART team observed very little earthquake-related damage along the Karakorum highway, with the exception of one small village, about half of which had slid down a slope. Survivors from this village are living in tents in their fields along the river. Road damage to Karakorum highway is minimal.

19. At Mehra, the team spoke with the Pakistani colonel responsible for establishing the tented camp. He stated that the GOP intends for people living at higher elevations to move to the camp, which is well below the snow line, before winter begins. Although the slope of the tent site is not too steep, and the camp has access to water, the site is not large enough to meet Sphere Project Guidelines (SPG) for the projected population. Currently, 1,000 people are at the site and are receiving support from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The OCHA representative stated that up to 70 percent of the total local population of 140,000 to 190,000 people may move down from the mountains. Representatives of local NGOs, however, believe that many of these people will likely stay with relatives or in other villages.

10. GOP military representatives at Mehra told the USAID/DART that the GOP military has a few hundred tents but needs 6,000 to 7,000 tents for this tent city. The GOP military plans to divide the camp into six to eight sectors, to correspond with existing villages, and proposes to build a helipad to facilitate movement of supplies to the camp. The OCHA representative stated that OCHA plans to remain closely involved in the planning process, providing the GOP military with advice and coordination with NGO partners as needed. GOP military representatives at Mehra are aware of their knowledge gaps, and appear willing to work with OCHA on camp establishment and management.

Technical Considerations

11. The site for the proposed 40,000-person GOP camp near the Allai Valley is significantly smaller than SPG would suggest. A 40,000-person camp requires 1.8 million square meters of space, whereas the current useable camp area may be less than 100,000 square meters, according to a representative of OCHA. Many people leaving the valley are staying with family and friends, or they are obtaining shelter materials and then returning to upland villages. Others would remain in a lowland shelter of some kind only until aftershocks subside. [Comment. At this time, aftershocks continue. End comment.] Most people interviewed suggested that social and cultural concerns would undermine occupancy in a camp setting, indicating that people will probably not remain in the GOP camp through the winter.

12. Many people suggested that as an alternative to tents, which people are willing to accept in lieu of alternative shelter options, they could utilize corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets and a small package of tools and household items in order to create a habitable space from salvaged building materials, and cover it with a solid, weatherproof roof. Of note, all people interviewed preferred CGI sheets over tents, stating that they could re-use the CGI sheets as part of a more permanent shelter solution in the spring. This finding suggests the need for the design of transitional shelter packages featuring CGI sheets, which can bridge the gap between relief and reconstruction activities. These packages could be supplemented with straightforward information on seismic-resistant construction measures that could be featured in the CFT program discussed above. Such an effort would promote the broader objective of quote Building Back Better, Safer, and Faster end quote.

Save the Children Food Distribution

13. The USAID/DART FO and ELO visited a Save the Children (SC) distribution activity. The distribution included sleeping bags, tents, and a one-week supply of food rations for one family. Using effective local community organizers, SC distributed these baskets at a location approximately 45 minutes outside the town boundary. The USAID/DART witnessed a well-organized distribution at which needy families, who were previously identified and provided with a coupon by local leaders, came to redeem the coupon for the relief package. The USAID/DART heard reports that the recipients appreciated this orderly system, and the system allowed SC to systematically and efficiently cover their target area.

14. This system of distribution gives SC strong relations with their beneficiaries and a solid network of capable leaders. It therefore provides them with a solid platform on which they can carry out the rest of the USAID/OFDA grant in shelter, cash-for-work (CFW), education, and psychological and social work with youth. SC proposes to carry out these activities in Batagram and in Bana village in the Allai valley. Though SC is still in the beginning stages of implementation of this grant, the USAID/DART was impressed with the plans and preparations for the execution of grant activities.

USAID/DART Meeting With OCHA Representative

15. Upon the arrival of the USAID/DART, Edward Pearn of the OCHA Field Camp briefed the team. On October 30, the U.N. had begun holding general donor coordination meetings, and recently the U.N. began holding health cluster meetings with the NGOs and other humanitarian relief agencies operating in Batagram District. The USAID/DART attended the general donor coordination meeting and listened to progress reports from organizations working in various sectors, including organizations involved in the camp initiated by the GOP military at Mehra.

16. [Comment: Regarding U.N. coordination efforts, the USAID/DART noted that nearly one month after the earthquake, the U.N. is just beginning to coordinate relief efforts in this area. At present, only three U.N. representatives work in this camp. In addition, local and international NGOs have stated that establishing camps as proposed by the GOP may not be the best approach to address the shelter crisis for those in the Allai valley who reportedly prefer to stay in their home areas. Many international agencies recognize that the establishment of centralized camps should be used as a back-up to other shelter options. In summary, to date, the U.N. has not effectively carried out its responsibility of coordinating the relief efforts, and the U.N. may be

supporting a potentially ineffective shelter solution. End comment.]

Conclusions and Recommendations

17. Based on its assessment, the USAID/DART concluded the following:

-- The U.N. is slow in starting its task of coordinating relief activities in Batagram District.

-- SC appears to be doing well distributing commodities provided by the U.S. military. SC appears to be on track for effective implementation of its USAID/OFDA grant.

-- NGOs question the priority of establishing temporary camps.

-- The camp proposed at Mehra could not house as large a population as proposed and comply with SPG. The tent village at Jessul that was spontaneously established does not currently comply with SPG, although there are no major water and sanitation problems now.

18. Based on its conclusions, the USAID/DART recommends the following:

-- CFW and CFT programs should be implemented in villages similar to Jessul. Villages like Jessul are ideal settings for these types of programs.

-- Under the umbrella management of local organizations such as Rural Support Program Network (RSPN), SRSP would be an effective implementing partner for CFW or CFT programs and shelter activities.

-- Relief programs should address the need to enhance the knowledge and capacity of those engaged in construction of earthquake-resistant structures. This type of program should begin immediately, as people are attempting to repair and rebuild houses.

-- As a complement to CFT programs to build capacity to engage in seismic-resistant construction practices, USAID-funded programs should raise earthquake awareness among the general population through public information campaigns.

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